

The Job Share Guidebook for Employees and Supervisors



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I. Introduction

This job sharing guidebook was designed to help you understand how job sharing works in the Alberta public service. It has sections which explain what job sharing is, what the benefits of job sharing are, and what things you should consider before job sharing. There is also a section which gives an overview of the steps involved in setting up a job share arrangement. If you have any questions about the information in this guidebook, contact the staff in your department human resource office who can tell you more about how job sharing works in your department.

II. Job Sharing in the Alberta Public Service

A. What is Job Sharing?

- Job sharing is a form of permanent part-time work where two people share the responsibilities, hours, salary, and benefits of one full-time job. The decision to share a position involves the potential partners, management, and the department human resource office. The authority to allow job sharing comes from the Deputy head of the department or a delegated authority.
- Job sharing is voluntary. It normally is initiated by the employee but always requires approval from management.
- Job sharing is flexible. There are several different ways to schedule hours in a job share position. As well, the duties of the job can be shared equally or divided to suit each partner's strengths depending on the kind of job being shared.
- There are many reasons why people job share. Some job share to help balance their work and family responsibilities. Others want a change in career by starting their own business. Still others want more time for hobbies or interests in the community. Job sharing can also be used to ease back into or out of the workforce.

B. How Job Sharing Works

Job sharing means that the duties of one full-time position are shared by two people. There are many ways to divide the actual duties of the job. The partners and the supervisor will decide together what will work best for the job. Some alternatives include the following:

- Sharing the duties equally between the two partners which means both people do exactly the same thing.
- Splitting the duties up so that each partner does the jobs that they are best suited for. This means that each partner will do different tasks.

- Assigning the duties based on the needs of the supervisor and the work unit at the time. Partners may be doing the same or different things.

There are also several different ways to divide the work hours of the job share partners. These are some options:

- working five half days
- working two and a half days a week
- working three days one week and two days the next
- working one week on and one week off
- working two weeks on and two weeks off

If the partners do not want to work exactly half time, they could split the week “sixty-forty,” where one partner works two days each week and the other partner works three days each week.

Before the decision on how to divide the time and duties is made, it is important to consider the kind of work that is being done. Remember, it is not possible to share every job because some types of work cannot be divided and still meet operational requirements.

The performance of job share partners is evaluated separately even though they share the duties of the job.

C. How Job Sharing Affects Benefits

Employees who share their jobs do not lose any of their benefits although some will be reduced based on the percentage of regular hours that an employee works. Calculating benefits based on the percentage of hours an employee works is called pro-rating. Some benefits that employees receive are not based on the amount of time worked. These benefits are called full premium benefits. In order to receive these benefits, employees will pay the same premium and will receive the same coverage as full-time employees.

These benefits are pro-rated based on the percentage of regular hours an employee works:

- Casual Illness
- Special Leave
- Vacation
- Statutory Holidays
- Salary Increases
- Long-Term Disability

These benefits have the same deductions and coverage as those of full-time employees:

- Alberta Health Care
- Blue Cross
- Dental Plan
- Dependent Life Insurance
- Group Life Insurance (based on percentage of salary)
- Pension (based on percentage of salary)

When employees are thinking about job sharing, they should carefully weigh all the implications. Any employees who are considering job sharing should contact their department human resource office for more information on how benefits work in job sharing situations.

D. How Job Sharing Affects Job Classifications

Most of the time, job sharers are at the same job classification level. If the duties of the position are shared equally between the two job sharers, then the job classification will remain the same and the job sharers will have the same position descriptions. If the duties of the position are divided between the two partners, then their position descriptions will be different. These position descriptions should be reviewed by the department human resource office to make sure the classifications are the same.

E. How Job Sharing Affects Other Terms and Conditions of Employment

Job sharers are permanent part-time employees. This means that job sharers have the same rights as all other permanent employees in the Alberta public service. If employees are in the bargaining unit, they are still covered by all the terms in the collective agreement. Job sharers also receive individual performance appraisals and have separate personnel files. Employees and supervisors who would like more information on how job sharing affects employee relations should contact their department human resource office.

III. What Job Sharing can do for Employees and Supervisors

A. Advantages of Job Sharing for Employees

Job sharing gives employees many different opportunities. These opportunities include the following:

1. Career Continuity

Job sharing lets employees stay active in their chosen careers while spending more time on other interests. Employees still get valuable experience because the level of the job usually does not change.

2. Flexibility

Job sharers work fewer hours and this means they have more flexibility to manage their family responsibilities such as child care, elder care or, adult dependent care. Job sharing will also give employees an opportunity to go back to school or take some courses. If an employee is considering retirement, job sharing can help the employee make the jump between full-time work and a life of leisure.

3. Workforce Re-entry

Job sharing works very well for employees who are trying to get back into the workforce. It lets them start working without giving up all their personal and social activities.

4. Other Interests

Job sharing is an excellent way for employees to become more involved in the community, enjoy more social activities, start a business, enjoy more leisure time, or pursue other interests. Employees may have many different interests and job sharing can give them time to spend on these interests.

B. Disadvantages of Job Sharing for Employees

There are some disadvantages to job sharing that employees can avoid if they know about them. The following is a list of potential disadvantages with some tips on how to reduce them.

1. Promotion

While job sharing lets employees stay active in their careers, job sharers may have fewer opportunities for moving up as not all work or situations are suitable to job sharing. If employees are interested in a promotion while they are job sharing, they should apply on the competition together as one full-time employee. The two employees' resumes would be submitted with one covering memo.

2. Training

Sometimes money for training is attached to a position. This means that two job sharers may have to share the money for training for their position. If this is the case, job sharers could use some of their own resources to take training.

3. Overtime

Job sharers do not receive premium rates for overtime until they have worked the equivalent of full-time hours. It is important for job sharers to remember this when they are job sharing. Also, there may be a tendency for employees to put in a few extra hours of overtime without pay. If this becomes a problem for employees, they should make prior arrangements with their supervisor to be paid for this time (at regular rates).

C. Advantages of Job Sharing for Supervisors

Even though supervising a job share arrangement may seem like more work for a supervisor, there are many real benefits from having job share partners as members of the team. Some of these benefits are

1. Increased Productivity

Because employees who job share work less than full-time hours and have more time for other responsibilities, they tend to be more effective at their jobs. As well, two job sharers often bring more combined expertise and skills to a job than one full-time employee.

2. Reduced Turnover

Job sharers tend to stay longer in the same job. Job sharing arrangements can help supervisors keep trained employees if full-time work hours do not fit into an employee's lifestyle.

3. Reduced Absenteeism

Because one job share partner can cover for the other, supervisors can arrange to have someone on the job at all times. Studies show that employees who job share are also known to take fewer sick leaves, medical appointments, and time off.

4. Peak Period Coverage and Overtime Reduction

Supervisors can make arrangements so that both job share partners can work daily, weekly, or monthly peak periods which can reduce the costs of overtime (two people covering during rush hours reduces the need for overtime caused by the extra work brought on by peak periods).

5. Alternative to Position Abolishment and Hiring Freezes

Voluntary job sharing can be a way to counteract position abolishment. Two people could share a job previously done by one person. Even when hiring is reduced or at a complete stand still, new staff can be added through a job share arrangement.

6. Facilitated Recruitment

Because working part-time and staying active in a chosen career appeals to many people, job sharing positions can be very useful to attract and retain valued employees. Job sharing positions can help to attract more applicants to competitions.

7. Increased Expertise

Supervisors can benefit from increased expertise from job sharers because each employee brings his or her own knowledge and experience to the job. Job sharing can also help ease valued employees into retirement so the work unit does not lose years of expertise at once.

D. Disadvantages of Job Sharing for Supervisors

If supervisors are aware of the things that may go wrong in a job share situation, they can take steps to stop them from occurring. The following is a list of issues that supervisors should be aware of when employees are job sharing.

1. Training Time

Most new employees need time from their supervisors for general orientation and on-the-job skills training. In many cases, this training can be done by the more experienced partner in the job share team. The partners will learn how to work together and the supervisor will save time.

2. Continuity in Job Functions

Job sharing works best when each partner's duties can be completed during each work period with little carry-over. Sometimes this doesn't happen. When the job duties overlap, the partners will need to communicate very closely to make sure that nothing is missed and that the job is finished effectively and on time. If the partners have similar ideas about work and similar work habits, the communication will be much easier.

3. Clear Communication with Staff

In some job sharing situations, the partners have staff reporting to them. If the reporting relationship between the partners and their staff is not clear, the team will feel confused and frustrated. If it is possible, it is best to have staff members report primarily to one supervisor or the other so that reporting relationships will be to only one person. The job share partners will cover for each other in emergencies. It is also helpful if both partners have similar styles of supervision. Close communication between all staff and the partners is important as well.

4. Communication

Communication between job share partners is very important. The partners must come up with ways to make sure that all important information is passed on.

IV. Can this Job be Shared?

While job sharing has many benefits for employees and supervisors, it is not possible to share every position. The following sections will help employees decide whether job sharing will meet their needs. This information will also help supervisors determine if it is possible to share the job and still meet operational requirements.

A. Things Employees Need to Consider Before Job Sharing

To decide if job sharing will work, employees should look at all the areas of their lives to determine what combination of work and leisure activities is best for them. It is also helpful if employees think about the amount of satisfaction they get from their jobs and the amount of money the job provides.

The following list of questions is designed to help employees look at these issues. Some of the questions may be hard to answer, so employees may want to use some outside resources to help them.

Employees should make sure that they allow themselves enough time to answer these questions carefully. The questions should help them sort through the issues and make the right decision.

Can I Afford it Financially?

- Have I thought about the financial implications of reducing my salary?
- Have I used a budget to make sure that I can afford job sharing?
- Have I investigated the impact that reducing my finances will have on my lifestyle?

If employees need help determining the impact a job share arrangement will have on their finances they should contact the department human resource office for assistance.

Can I Afford it Professionally?

- What do I want to be doing three years from now?
- What will working part-time do to this goal?
- In order to meet my personal career goals, do I need to do certain things in my current job after it has been restructured? What are they?
- If I share my job, will I be able to maintain my career goals?
- Will I take extra training on my own, if I can't take it through work?

Am I Ready to Share my Job?

- Am I happy with my job?
- Do I have the determination to go through the process of setting up a job share position?
- Am I ready to give up part of my job?
- Am I ready to work as part of a team?
- Am I ready to put extra time and effort into building a solid and trusting relationship with my job share partner?
- Am I willing to change?

B. Things Supervisors Need to Consider Before Setting Up a Job Share

In most cases, job sharing works and benefits both supervisors and employees. Since supervisors must answer for the results that their work units achieve, they must be sure that the productivity of the work unit will not suffer because of the job sharing arrangement.

The questions that follow will help supervisors make sure that the job can be shared while still maintaining productivity. If there is doubt in the supervisors' minds about the arrangement after these questions have been answered, the supervisor should contact the department human resource office to work out the details.

Time Considerations

- How much time would be required to train a new employee?
- Could someone else in the unit help with training?
- How much extra time would it take to supervise an additional person?
- Would other employees use more time because of the job share arrangement (i.e., administrative tasks)?

Continuity

- How much of the job involves long term projects or continuous tasks?
- Are there specific tasks in the job that can be done by each partner?
- Have the potential job share partners come up with workable ways to make sure that continuous tasks are completed?
- Does the job have supervisory responsibilities?
- If the job does have supervisory responsibilities, is there a logical way to assign supervision tasks to each partner?
- Have the potential job share partners come up with a plan to make sure that all the supervisory responsibilities will be covered?
- Do the job share partners have similar work habits and attitudes? (If a partner has not been found, this is something to consider.)

Communication

- Is there a large amount of contact with supervisors, subordinates, or client groups in this position?
- Have the job share partners come up with ways to make sure that there is full communication with each other and the people mentioned above?
- Do both partners have good communication and interpersonal skills? (If a partner has not been chosen, this will be something to consider.)

- Will the extra time it takes for the partners to brief each other reduce productivity in the job?

Potential Benefits

- Will job sharing help me retain a good employee I might otherwise lose?
- Will job sharing help me cope with extra staffing needs during vacation and peak work periods?
- Will job sharing have a positive effect on morale in the unit?
- Will I benefit from the additional expertise that the new partner will bring to the group?

V. Setting up a Job Share Arrangement

These steps are generally followed when a job share arrangement is being set up.

1. The employee does some research on job sharing and decides if it will work for him or her.
2. After talking to his or her supervisor, the employee will normally be asked to prepare a job share proposal and present it to management for approval.
3. If the job share proposal is approved, the employee, supervisor, and human resource consultant will prepare a job share agreement.
4. If there is no job share partner already available, the human resource consultant together with the employee and supervisor will recruit a job share partner.
5. Once a partner has been found, the human resource consultant will issue an offer letter.
6. The employees will begin a trial period to decide if the job share will work.
7. If the trial period is successful, the employees will become permanent part-time employees. (If one of the partners is new to the Alberta public service, he or she may have to complete a probationary period before becoming a permanent employee.)

A. Where to Begin

1. Employees should talk to their supervisors about their interest in job sharing to get a sense for their supervisors' feelings about the option. There are some jobs that are not easily shared and will need considerable thought to make them work. Supervisors will play a valuable role in determining whether or not a job share will work.
2. Employees should contact their department human resource office to get more details on salary, benefits, employee relations, or classification implications.

If an employee still wants to job share after these research steps are done, he or she will most likely have to submit a job share proposal. The next section will provide detailed instructions on how this is done.

B. Developing a Job Share Proposal

Experience with job sharing has indicated that job shares are most successful when interested parties put together a proposal setting out the parameters under which the job share is to proceed. This proposal should be seen as a discussion document that can be changed or modified based on discussions with the supervisor.

A detailed comprehensive job sharing proposal will have a significant impact on the acceptance of the job share and it will also provide a detailed definition of roles, responsibilities, scheduling, communications systems, etc. This detail will support the success of the job share and enhance the comfort level of both partners and management.

The following is a step-by-step guide to assist employees in writing a proposal to job share. Assistance is available from their departmental human resource office.

1. Introduction

Begin with a simple statement of purpose, for example:

“This proposal is a request to share the (YOUR JOB TITLE) position currently held by (YOUR NAME), between (YOUR NAME) and (YOUR PARTNER’S NAME).”

2. Job Description

Ask your supervisor for a copy of your existing job description. Using this as a base, draw up a detailed description of your job.

Include the following information:

- a. Job Title
- b. Status (permanent full-time)
- c. Location (office address, etc.)

- d. Department
- e. Immediate Supervisor
- f. A brief summary of your duties in 25 words or less
- g. A detailed catalogue of “Specific Duties” outlining the actual tasks that make up your job.
- h. Responsibilities and Accountabilities: What are you in charge of?
- i. Job Specifications:
 - How much of your work is done independently?
 - How much do you supervise others?
 - How much authority do you have for self-direction?
 - Do you work with confidential information?
 - How difficult or complex are your job tasks?
 - How important is accuracy of work?
 - Do you handle cash?
 - How much are you in contact with others? Who are you in contact with?
 - How much education is required for the position?
 - How much experience or training does it require?

(Your departmental human resource office will provide you with the minimum recruitment standards for your position classification.)

3. Your Partner

If you are proposing a specific partner for the job share, it is important that you provide a profile, including:

- a. Experience
- b. Skills
- c. Education
- d. A description of how his or her skills match and compliment yours

A discussion of what training and orientation he or she would need and how to get it

If the sharer involved is not known to your supervisor, include a resume as an Appendix.

(If a partner has not been identified, this section should identify the skills and experience that would enhance your skills in a job share. Remember you want to work with a person with compatible strengths and weaknesses, values, work ethics, etc.)

4. Task Analysis

Look over the specific tasks listed in your job description. How much work is carried over, day to day, and week to week? Are there fairly separate areas within your work? Some jobs, where there is little carryover from day to day, or where distinct work areas exist, can be split rather than shared. Even when most tasks must be shared, by their nature, some tasks may be made the responsibility of one or the other partner. Again, this is an opportunity for you to consider the strengths and interests of each partner and tailor the job accordingly.

In your proposal, discuss briefly how your job duties will be shared or divided, and why. If one or the other is to have overall responsibility for a particular project or section of the work, be sure to state this. How will staff meetings be handled?

If your job includes standby and call back responsibilities, it is imperative that your proposal identify how these responsibilities will be handled.

5. Time Schedules

There are many ways to share time: mornings and afternoons, half weeks, week on/week off. Consider both your own needs and how it is most practical to split the work. When do you want your free time? Do you need to overlap your schedules at some point to trade information?

Hours of work for all permanent job shares within the Alberta public service must fall within the guidelines as outlined in the Master Agreement.

“Permanent Positions” means a position established as such, in which the incumbent is required to work not less than

- 3 hours on each work day of the year; or
- 7 hours/day on 2 or more work days per week; or
- 10 full days per month.

The Alberta government payroll system can best accommodate job share situations with the establishment of a specific schedule for both partners. This will ensure a consistent salary and administration of benefits such as statutory holiday compensation. Any changes in schedules should be reported to your department’s payroll area.

6. Communication Systems

How will important information from customers, clients, supervisors, staff meetings, etc. be passed from one sharer to the other? If a client calls back unexpectedly next week, how will your partner know the status of his/her situation? What information could get lost in the cracks? Consider all the possible ways something could go wrong.

Next, consider what communication mechanisms and procedures could be used to avoid or overcome these problems. Perhaps what’s needed is a Changeover File, or a bulletin board, or coffee together once a week. Do both of you need to attend staff meetings? What in-service training is involved in your job, and how will that be handled?

In your proposal, discuss briefly the kinds of information that must be transferred and the problems you wish to avoid. Outline the communication mechanisms you envision and how they will be used to ensure the job gets done smoothly.

7. Cost

It is important that you understand the full financial implications of the job share. Contact your departmental human resource office for all salary and benefit information. You could also identify the need for extra office space, equipment, etc.

8. Advantages and Disadvantages

In addition to the advantages already outlined, you may wish to offer other advantages that would directly benefit your supervisor:

- a. Partners can cover for each other on vacation;
- b. Partners can cover for each other in cases of illness or special leave.

After listing the advantages, list briefly the disadvantages as you see them and how they can be minimized. Consider cost, communication, training, and supervision difficulties.

9. Implementation

- a. Suggest a starting date.
- b. Propose a trial period (six months to a year) to be followed by an evaluation by management. (The evaluation criteria should be established prior to entering into the job share agreement.)
- c. Describe what will happen if one or the other of the partners has to leave. Will the remaining partner go full-time? What happens at the end of the trial period if the job share arrangement is not working?
- d. Suggest that when an accord is reached on how job sharing is to be set up, a written agreement be drawn up so both sides know where they stand. This agreement is normally a modified form of your proposal.

Now that you have completed your written proposal, your next step should be to give a copy to your immediate supervisor. Your supervisor can then discuss with you any concerns he or she may have as well as any concerns senior management may have. Once your supervisor agrees to your job share proposal, he or she can take it forward to obtain the appropriate management approvals.

C. The Job Share Agreement

Once approval from management has been given, a job share agreement will be drawn up. This agreement will provide information on the roles and responsibilities of job sharers and management. Its purpose is to support the success of the arrangement. The following is a brief list of things that are usually included in an agreement. The department human resource office usually plays a part in drafting this agreement and will provide you with the appropriate details at the time you draw up the agreement.

1. Person and Position Information

- a. Names of Partners
- b. Job Title/Classification
- c. Status of Position (permanent part time)
- d. Status of employees (permanent/probationary, etc.)
- e. Location (worksite)
- f. Department
- g. Supervisor

2. Definition of Responsibilities

- a. Attachment of the Job Description as an Appendix if it is deemed appropriate.
- b. Identification of situations where specific projects are to be assigned to individual partners.
- c. Where there will be coverage for standby or callback and clarification of how this is to be accomplished.
- d. Once the responsibilities of the job sharers are defined, these should be reviewed for classification implications before the agreement is signed.

3. Scheduling

- a. Hours of work for each partner
 - Days of work
 - Standby/callback schedule
 - Meetings
 - Relief for partner, etc.

4. Communication

a. Communication systems

- Partner
- Supervisor
- Peers
- Subordinates
- Clients, etc.

5. Terms of the Job Share

a. Duration of trial period

b. What constitutes a successful trial period, i.e., evaluation criteria of the job share arrangement

c. Terms and conditions for termination of the arrangement

- Who has rights to the full-time position?
- What happens if a partner opts out?
- What happens if operational requirements are not met?

It is important to clearly define the circumstances under which the arrangement will be terminated. This will reduce the chances of a disagreement arising at a later date.

6. Signatures of Partners and Management

The remaining steps in the process of setting up a job share arrangement become the responsibility of the department human resource office. While the employee and supervisor will still be involved, the human resource consultant will guide the process.

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